(b) if so, the progress made in this regard during the Kharif season 2001-2002?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As on 2.3.2002, a quantity of 4.51 lakh MTs of Boiled rice has been procured by FCI in Andhra Pradesh.

**New Foodgrains Policy**

801. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to announce shortly a New Foodgrains Policy;

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when the new policy would be put in place;

(c) whether it is also a fact that it is proposed to dismantle the present grain procurement system;

(d) if so, whether the viewpoints of the various State Governments have been sought in the matter; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to safeguard interest of the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) A High Level Committee (HLC) under the Chairmanship of Prof. Abhijit Sen, former Chairman, CACP has been constituted to formulate a long term grain policy for the country. The HLC is expected to submit its final report in March 2002.

(b) to (e) The new policy will be finalized after the HLC's final report is examined by the Ministry. At present there is no concrete proposal to dismantle the existing system.

**Amendment in Essential Commodities Act**

802. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal to amend the Essentieal Commodities Act

to provide for free inter-State movement of foodgrains and farm produce and to remove certain other curbs on storage and stocking of such commodities;

(b) if so, the details of the proposal and the present status of its consideration; and

(c) the details of the suggestions received from the States which are being incorporated and those which are likely to be left out in the proposed amendments alongwith reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (c) The Central Government has issued an Order under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 allowing dealers to freely buy, stock, sell, transport, distribute etc. any quantity in respect of wheat, paddy/rice, coarse grains, sugar, edible oilseeds and edible oils without requiring any license or permit therefor under any order issued under the Act. The Order will take effect after thirty days from the date of its issue (15.2.2002) notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any Order made by a State Government before the commencement of the Order.

**Storage cost of wheat**

803. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the cost of storage of wheat per ton in Punjab and Haryana and the cities of Mumbai and Kolkata, separately;

(b) whether the storage charges are paid uniformly by Government to all the agencies all over the country; and

(c) whether this cost is less that the cost of storage borne by FCI itself in Punjab, Haryana, Mumbai and Kolkata?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (c) For Rabi Marketing Season 2001-2002 storage cost has provisionally been allowed uniformly @ Rs. 21.00 per ton per month to various States, including Punjab and Haryana, which procure wheat for the Central Pool. The storage cost is not fixed city-wise separately.